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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OTRA](#) [AMGT](#) [APER](#) [ASEC](#) [PREF](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: COUNTRY CLEARANCE FOR DRC - WILLIAM FITZGERALD, ANTOINETTE
FERRARA, WENDY HENNING

REF: STATE 203436

¶1. Post grants country clearance and welcomes the arrival of Deputy Assistant Secretary William Fitzgerald, Program Officer Wendy Henning along with USAID Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance Director of the Disaster Response and Mitigation Division, Antoinette Ferrara to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) from January 13 - 25, 2007 to participate in a joint assessment mission with ECHO.

¶2. POINT OF CONTACT

Bill Damour and Jay Nash will be the Control Officers for the visit and can be reached at:

Bill Damour

Office Phone: 011-243-81-225-5872
Cell phone: 011-243-81-880-4901
IVG: 8-934-2024

Jay Nash

Office Phone: 011-243-81-880-3274
Cell Phone: 011-243-81-880-1426
IVG: 8-934-2407

¶3. VISA REQUIREMENTS

A valid Congolese visa is required of all American passport holders, whether diplomatic, official or tourist. Congolese visas cannot be issued at the airport.

¶4. FISCAL DATA REQUIREMENTS

Fiscal data or credit card info must be provided in advance to the control officer listed above for any assistance required, including meet and assist at the airport, hotel reservations, cell phones, airport expeditors, translators/interpreters, etc. The Embassy is unable to make hotel reservations or rental arrangements without financial information.

¶5. ALL VISITS MUST COMMENCE IN KINSHASA

At the Ambassador's request, all visits to the Democratic Republic of Congo, which require country clearance, are to commence in Kinshasa, the country's capital. Travel to other regions of the country including the Kivus, Orientale and Maniema provinces, is to be undertaken from Kinshasa. Embassy Kinshasa will provide assistance with these travel arrangements. As travel in the Congo can be complicated, visitors should consult with their Embassy control officer early in the planning process.

¶6. AIRPORT ADVICE FOR ARRIVING PASSENGERS

Procedures at Ndjili Airport are changing as airport officials try

to strengthen security procedures. At this time, Embassy expeditors are no longer allowed in the Arrivals Hall and can provide assistance only after travelers pass through Immigration control.

After deplaning and entering the Arrivals Hall, travelers should proceed to the "Official VIP/Diplomat" line, with passports and health certificates ready for presentation to the Immigration officials. After clearing Immigration, travelers will be met on the other side of the booth by the Embassy expeditor, holding a placard with the names of travelers being met. The expeditor will then collect baggage claim tickets and passports, collect the bags, and then take travelers outside to the Embassy vehicles. Once outside the terminal, local porters will carry your bags to the Embassy vehicle. Please be prepared to give the expeditor one USD per bag to pay the porters.

While at the airport, travelers are warned to not, repeat not, pay money or give their documents to anyone other than the Embassy expeditor. This also applies to individuals in uniform, who may offer their services. Be polite but do not accept their assistance.

17. CUSTOMS AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT

If you will be carrying tools, heavy cases, or any electronic equipment other than personal devices, contact your control officer with specific information that can be passed to the expeditor for assistance with customs clearance.

18. ACCOMMODATION

Three single rooms have been booked at the Memling Hotel, tel: 011-243-81-700-1111. The room price is within per diem and includes breakfast.

19. SECURITY

Due to elections and possible demonstrations throughout the election period, Post remains in an enhanced security position.

Kinshasa is a critical threat crime post. Although there is no specific threat targeting Americans, all visitors should remain vigilant and cautious during their stay in Kinshasa. Because of political instability in parts of the country, all travel outside of Kinshasa must be approved by the RSO. Your control officer will make reservations for you at one of the hotels the Regional Security Office has approved for visitors. The RSO advises that you exercise caution in the areas around these hotels, and that you not travel after nightfall unless accompanied by someone familiar with the security situation in Kinshasa. TDY personnel should not use any form of local transportation and should refrain from displaying/using cameras in public.

A recent scam involves individuals in civilian clothes claiming to be Congolese police/security officials who approach unsuspecting expatriates on the street and demand to see their passport or other identification documents. They try and convince the would-be victim to get in their unmarked vehicle and accompany them to the local police precinct. If you are on the street and approached by someone claiming to be a police or security official, identify yourself as a diplomat working at the U.S. Embassy, walk briskly away, and make sure to report the incident to the RSO or Post One as soon as you have access to a phone. Do not approach or get in their vehicle.

10. CURRENCY

The use of dollars in the DRC is legal and acceptable for most transactions. Travelers arriving in the DRC with more than USD 10,000 must fill out a currency declaration. Travelers departing the DRC are not allowed to take out more than USD 10,000 in cash.

Please note that ATMs are not available in Congo. However, USG personnel are authorized USD and Franc Congolais accommodation exchange at the Embassy and/or USAID cashier; personal or travelers' checks are acceptable. Most personnel use Franc Congolais only for small purchases and tips.

American Express, Visa, Master Card, and Diner's Club are accepted in payment of bills at Kinshasa's two major hotels. However, very few other businesses in the Congo accept credit cards and their use outside of the major hotels is discouraged. Cashing travelers checks outside the Embassy is generally not advised because banks charge substantial fees for cashing them; travelers checks are rarely accepted at all outside of Kinshasa.

¶11. MEDICAL

Access to the Embassy Health Unit is available for US citizen, direct-hire USG employees and their eligible family members. If you have been or will be posted more than 60 days overseas in a calendar year (not necessarily consecutive), you must provide proof of a Department of State medical clearance from M/MED to qualify for access to the our Health Unit. Official visitors who are overseas less than 60 days in a calendar year are not required to have medical clearance and are authorized emergency, but not routine, use of the Health Unit.

Other official visitors may receive Health Unit services if they meet the following criteria: 1) an individual employment relationship with the USG, 2) a MED Washington clearance, and 3) a USG agency that guarantees payment for medical expenses and/or personal overseas health and medevac insurance. Visitors without Health Unit access will be referred to a local medical clinic, which provides all emergency and non-routine medical care for Embassy employees and family members.

MALARIA: Congo is a malaria-affected area. All travelers should consult with medical personnel and take malaria prophylactics as appropriate, before arriving in Kinshasa.

YELLOW FEVER: You must have a valid yellow fever vaccination and your yellow vaccination card when you arrive. You may be charged a fine of \$50-\$100 without proof of vaccination.

¶12. ACCESS TO CONTROLLED ACCESS AREAS

Each visitor to Kinshasa requiring unescorted access to controlled access areas (CAA) must arrange for their sponsoring agency or sending post to forward their security clearance to the RSO by telegram in advance of the visit. In accordance with regulations, a diplomatic passport or Department of State identification card is not sufficient to allow unescorted access to CAA'S. Kinshasa does not have the resources to escort visitors who arrive without proper advance security clearance.

¶13. Government-owned thumb/flash drives with proper classification label can be used at Post, but only on Open Net computers outside of the Controlled Access Area (CAA). These devices cannot be used on any classified computers at Post. Thumb/flash drives must be hand carried and protected the same as a laptop. The drive(s) could be pouched in advance to the control officer or the IMO. Upon arrival at Post, the Control Officer will provide a thumb/flash drive request form that should be completed and taken to the IPC or ISC along with the flash drive before use. Questions should be directed to Information Management Officer (IMO) MbennaVG@state.gov or Information Systems Security Officer (ISSO) BakkenCA@state.gov.

¶14. You may visit the Embassy's Intranet website at <http://kinshasa.state.gov>. While still under construction, information is being added daily that you may find useful.

¶15. Have a good trip. Post looks forward to seeing you in Kinshasa.

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